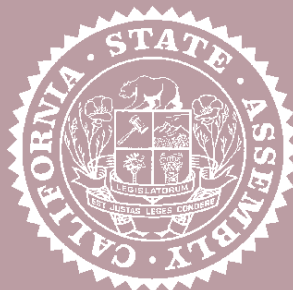


# ADOPT-A-SCHOOL PROGRAM HANDBOOK



COMPLIMENTS OF  
MAJORITY LEADER WILMA CHAN  
CALIFORNIA STATE ASSEMBLY



# **ADOPT-A-SCHOOL HANDBOOK**

## **Table of Contents**

### **I. Introduction**

### **II. Section 1 – Adopt-A-School**

What is An Adopt-A-School Program?

Who Can Participate?

Why Adopt A School?

What Questions You Should Ask Yourself Before Adopting A School?

How Do You Get Started?

What Are Some Do's and Don'ts For Working With Schools?

What Volunteer Opportunities Exist In the Schools?

### **III. Section 2 - Organizing Adopt-A-School Activities**

Spruce Up Day

Promote Accelerated Literacy (PAL) Program

Shining Examples of Service

### **IV. Section 3 - Organizations That Can Help You With Your Efforts**

HEROES

Alameda Education Foundation

### **V. Conclusion**

### **VI. Adopt-A-School Checklist**

## Introduction

Dear Friend:

It's no secret. Public schools are facing difficult times. But even in the best of times, every school needs volunteers to help prepare every child to succeed in school. Studies have consistently shown that students at schools with high levels of volunteerism perform better on exams, have lower truancy rates and are more likely to graduate from high school.

Volunteering is a longstanding tradition here in the Bay Area. Every year, millions of Americans make an immeasurable contribution to their communities by volunteering. A recent poll found that over one-third of the American public has been or is now a volunteer. Over half of those presently involved in volunteer work are also employed full or part-time. Today's volunteers are active, dynamic, creative individuals of all ages who possess the skills, desire and patience to accomplish a wide variety of tasks. Whether you can spend 30 minutes a week or 10 hours or even just one day a year, there are hundreds of volunteer opportunities waiting to be filled in the public schools.

One example of the positive effects of school volunteerism is occurring at Fruitvale Elementary School in Oakland which I "adopted." For the past 2 years members of my staff and community volunteers have tackled painting, gardening and repair projects at regularly scheduled "Spruce Up Days," converted a portable into a new preschool for 42 preschoolers and organized a book drive to purchase books for these students.

As a result of this ongoing school adoption, several community organizations have formed partnerships with the school and hundreds of volunteers contributed thousands of hours of service.

You can get involved, too – as an individual or by encouraging your employer, community group or faith-based organization to adopt a school. By choosing to volunteer in the Adopt-A-School program you can make a positive difference in the lives of children in the community where you live and work.

**Hon. Wilma Chan**  
**Assemblymember, 16th Assembly District**

---

*A 1998 Cornell University study found that "volunteering boosts self-esteem and energy and gives Americans a sense of mastery over their lives," (Cornell Chronicle 5.7.98, by Susan Lang)*

## SECTION 1 – Adopt A School



### What Is An “Adopt-A-School” Program?

Adopt-A-School programs create opportunities for businesses, organizations, unions, neighborhood groups, faith-based organizations, government agencies and individuals to help improve public schools — pre-schools, elementary schools, middle and high schools — by providing increased access to volunteers and resources.

Adopt-A-School programs offer a wide range of volunteer opportunities. Volunteers can make a commitment to tutor children in core academic subjects on a short-term (2-3 months) or long-term (9-month) basis, or spend a morning organizing a school library or planting a school garden.

### Who Can Participate?

- Individuals
- Businesses
- Organizations
- Elected Officials
- Government Agencies

### Why Adopt a School?

- To make a difference in a child’s life.
- To share a skill.
- To help someone.
- To get to know a community.
- To help schools meet the needs of their students.
- Because children need you!

### What Questions You Should Ask Yourself Before Adopting A School?

The success of your Adopt-A-School experience requires both your enjoyment of the service you give and adherence to the commitment you make. Ask yourself these questions before deciding to volunteer:

- How much time can I commit?
- Do I want to work in a school close to home or work?
- Do I want an ongoing, regularly scheduled assignment, a short-term assignment, or a one-time assignment?
- Am I willing to participate in a training course or do I want to start my volunteer work immediately?
- What talents or skills would I like to offer?

---

*According to the National Mentoring Partnership, a community is better off when people in that community take time to mentor a young person, because mentored teens are 46% less likely to get into drugs; 59% get better grades; and 73% raise their goals.*



## How Do You Get Started?

Once you have decided to adopt a school, where do you begin? Here are some guidelines:

1. **If you are a business or community group, identify the person(s) responsible for managing your Adopt-A-School program.** This person(s) will serve as the “primary liaison” between your organization and the school you select, to help assure a successful Adopt-A-School program. This liaison will work closely with school staff to ensure that the necessary elements of the program are in place before you begin.
2. **Identify the services and resources you will bring to the school.** Develop an inventory of what you or your organization has to offer a school and what services you can provide, based on what the school has identified as its top needs. *(See pages 9-12 for listings of specific volunteer opportunities.)*

The following questions will help assess your organization’s capacity to provide these services:

- How many people in your organization are willing to volunteer in this effort?
  - What hours and days of the week are individuals available to volunteer?
  - What will be the length of your commitment?
3. **Selecting a school.** In order to ensure your adopt-a-school program is successful work with the volunteer coordinating agency in your district to assist you with identifying a school. In Oakland contact HEROES and in Alameda contact the Alameda Education Foundation.
  4. **Learn as much as you can about the school in order to tailor an Adopt-A-School program to its specific needs.** Visit the school district’s web site or contact the principal to find out about existing service projects and volunteer opportunities. You may also contact the school district’s volunteer coordinating agency. In Oakland contact HEROES, in Alameda contact the Alameda Education Foundation (AEF). *(For contact information please see pages 24.)*
  5. **Have your “primary liaison” contact the school principal to set up an introductory meeting.** This is a very important step that cannot be omitted.

You will want to do several things during this meeting:

- Introduce yourself or your organization and express a desire to start an Adopt-A-School program. Confirm the school’s interest in working together.
- Ask the principal who will be the “school site contact.” This person will answer questions and coordinate your involvement at the school, including identifying the students and teachers you will work with and where you will conduct your volunteer activities.
- Be sure you understand school requirements and procedures, as well as



district regulations for your involvement at the school. Depending upon the type of volunteer activities you participate in, you may be required to complete a volunteer application, have a tuberculosis test and be fingerprinted. (HEROES and AEF can assist volunteers with referrals in order to complete these requirements.)

6. **Once you've identified the school's needs, develop a plan of action, calendar and timeline for your program activities.** After meeting with the school principal you will have a better idea of which needs the Adopt-A-School program can address.

- Develop a plan of action and calendar for your Adopt-A-School activities and provide them to the principal and/or school contact to review and approve. Once you've received approval, you are ready to implement the Adopt-A-School program!

7. **Program review and evaluation.** After a few weeks of service take the time to evaluate the progress of the Adopt-A-School program. This should be done on a regular basis as you may need to fine-tune some of your activities. Ask school staff for constructive feedback and offer your assessment of how the program is working.

#### **Some Do's and Don'ts When Working With Schools**

- Do have fun.
- Do set realistic boundaries on your time commitments and share them with the principal, teacher and students.
- Do develop an understanding and appreciation of the school culture. Remember that you're there to offer assistance, not run the school.
- Do ask questions whenever you are unclear about school policies and procedures.
- Do sign in at the school office each time you arrive at school, and before entering classrooms or school facilities.
- Don't donate or bring inappropriate materials to school. Check with the principal first.
- Don't proselytize to the students regarding any religious doctrine, political ideology or philosophy.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Don't overextend yourself.

---

*Professor Phyllis Moen, Cornell University,  
"we become what we do – volunteering gives us  
a sense of ourselves as engaged in meaningful,  
productive activities that help change the world  
and a wider view of our possibilities, which  
benefit our psychological well-being." (Cornell  
Chronicle 5.7.98, by Susan Lang)*



## What Volunteer Opportunities Are Available?

Volunteers can get involved in many ways, using as much or as little time as they have available. Some volunteer opportunities such as Reading Tutors involve 30 to 60 minutes of volunteer time per week for a nine-month academic year. To provide continuity for students and teachers.

If you cannot volunteer on a regular basis, consider helping with a one-time project like planting a school garden, helping set-up a school library or accompanying a class on a field trip.

Some volunteer support can even be done from your home or office, for example, if you have experience writing grant proposals, you can help schools identify potential funding sources.

Whether you can spare an hour a week or an hour a month, you can make a difference in a child's school experience.

*Included in this "how to" guide is a listing of schools in Oakland and Alameda, which have outlined specific volunteer opportunities at their schools. (See pages 9-12)*

Here is a list of volunteer needs identified by school principals in Oakland and Alameda:



- **Reading Tutors** – Read to children and listen to them read. Work with students, one-on-one or in small groups to improve reading and literacy skills. (30 – 60 min./week, 1 –3x/week)
- **Tutors for Math, Science and Writing** – Help students advance their skills in these critical areas. (1 hr./wk.)
- **Lunch Hour and Recess Activities** – Organize games, play Scrabble, “just talk to children and listen to them.” (1 hr./wk.)
- **School Library Assistance** – Help students check out books, supervise noontime use of library, reshelv books. (1 hr./1-3x/week)
- **Computer Lab Support** – Help students improve computer skills, or “trouble-shoot” computer malfunctions on an occasional or ongoing basis. (NOTE: Several one-time opportunities are also available in this category, for example, designing and setting up a wireless computer lab.)
- **Mentoring** – Classroom visits by individuals from various professions and careers help expose children to diverse career opportunities. (One-Time or Ongoing Opportunities)
- **Help with After-School Enrichment Programs** – Share your talents with students in areas such as arts and crafts, sports, music, carpentry, cooking,



martial arts and knitting. Lend a hand with after-school homework clubs. (1 hr./1-5x/wk.)

- **Field Trips** – Accompany a class on a field trip. Sponsor a field trip. (One-Time or Ongoing Opportunities)
- **Gardening** – Help students plant and tend the school garden. (One-Time or Ongoing Opportunities)
- **Special and One-Time Events** – Organize a Health Fair or Halloween Carnival, help students make Mother and Father's Day crafts, host a Teacher and Staff Appreciation Luncheon. Provide small prizes to teachers like pencils, erasers and paper for Student Achievement Awards. Participate in a Read Aloud Day, Principal For A Day or Fall Dictionary Project
- **Parent Education** – Present workshops in economic self-sufficiency, financial literacy and technology. Train parents to be effective school volunteers. There is a need for bi-lingual volunteers in these areas. (One-Time or Ongoing Opportunities)
- **Office Support** – Photocopying, laminating and assembling classroom materials. (30-60 min./week)
- **Grant Writing** – Help schools write grant applications and proposals to identify additional funding sources. (One-Time or Ongoing Opportunities)
- **Back-to-School Preparation and Registration** – Assist schools at the beginning of the school year by helping to put up bulletin board displays and prepare the school site for new and returning students. Assist school personnel with signing students up for library cards, bus passes as well as creating banners welcoming students back to school.



## Alameda School Volunteer Needs

School	Phone	1:1 Reading Tutors	Academic Tutors	After School Enrichment	After School Sports	Community Garden	Computer Lab	Field Trips	Grant Writing	Homework Help	Library Volunteers	Lunch Recess	Mentoring	Recess Supervisor
Bay Farm K-6	748-4010	X				X						X		
Earhart	748-4003	X	X			X					X			
Edison	748-4002	X	X	X		X				X	X			
Franklin	748-4004	X	X			X					X	X		
Haight	748-4005	X	X									X		X
Longfellow	748-4008	X	X				X							
Lum	748-4009	X	X							X	X			
Miller	748-4011	X	X	X			X			X				
Otis	748-4013	X	X											
Paden	748-4014	X	X			X	X						X	
Washington	748-4007	X	X											
Woodstock	748-4012	X	X			X		X		X			X	
Chipman Middle	748-4017	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	
Lincoln Middle	748-4018	X	X			X								
Wood Middle	748-4015	X						X						

### \*Oakland Elementary School Volunteer Needs

School	Phone	Reading 1:1 Tutors	Academic Tutors	Enrichment School After	Sports School After	Community Garden	Computer Lab	Field Trips	Grant Writing	Homework Help	Library Volunteers	Lunch Recess	Mentoring	Recess Supervisor	Writing Skills
ACORN Woodland	879-0190	X		X		X	X		X			X		X	
Allendale	879-1010	X	X	X									X		
Bella Vista*	879-1020	X	X	X		X				X	X				
Brookfield Village*	879-1030	X	X	X									X		
Burbank	879-1040	X	X												
Burchhalter	879-1050	X	X				X								
Carl Munck*	879-1680	X	X				X								
Chabot	879-1060	X	X												
Cleveland	879-1080	X	X	X											
Cole	879-1090	X	X	X						X			X		
Crocker Highlands	879-1110	X	X												
Dolores Huerta	533-9790	X	X							X			X		
E. Morris Cox*	879-1100	X	X									X			
Emerson*	879-1150	X	X			X						X			
Franklin	879-1160	X	X	X	X		X								
Fruitvale	879-1170	X	X	X		X		X		X		X	X	X	
Garfield*	879-1180	X	X							X		X		X	
Glenview	879-1190	X	X	X					X	X					
Golden Gate*	879-1200	X	X	X						X					
Grass Valley*	879-1220	X	X				X	X							X
Hawthorne*	879-1492	X	X				X		X						
HIGHLAND*	879-1260	X	X												
Hillcrest	879-1270	X		X		X	X				X				
Hoover*	879-1700	X			X	X				X	X	X			

\*Child development center or preschool on-site

School	Phone	1:1 Reading Tutors	Academic Tutors	After School Enrichment	After School Sports	Community Garden	Computer Lab	Field Trips	Grant Writing	Homework Help	Library Volunteers	Lunch Recess	Mentoring	Recess Supervisor	Writing Skills
Horace Mann	879-1360	X													
Howard*	879-1660	X	X	X	X										
Jefferson*	879-1280	X	X			X								X	
Joaquin Miller	879-1420	X			X		X				X	X	X		
John Swett*	879-1560	X	X												
Kaiser	879-1710	X	X					X							
La Escuelita	879-1210	X	X	X		X						X			
Lafayette	879-1290	X	X		X									X	
Lakeview*	879-1300	X	X												
Laurel*	879-1310	X	X							X					
Lazear	879-1320	X	X												
Lincoln	879-1330	X	X												
Lockwood*	879-1340	X		X											X
Longfellow*	879-1350	X	X	X									X		
Manzanita*	879-1370	X	X												
Marcus Foster	879-2080	X	X												X
Markham	879-1380	X	X	X											
Maxwell Park	879-1390	X					X		X		X				
Melrose	879-1410	X	X							X			X		
ML King*	879-1820	X	X				X			X					
Montclair	879-1430	X													
Parker*	879-1440	X	X									X	X		
Peralta*	879-1450	X	X			X			X			X	X		
Piedmont Ave.*	879-1460	X		X						X					
Prescott*	879-1470	X	X					X							
Redwood Heights	879-1480	X	X							X					
Santa Fe*	879-1500	X	X									X	X		
Sequoia*	879-1510	X		X		X				X		X			
Sherman	879-1530	X	X												

\*Child development center or preschool on-site

School	Phone	1:1 Reading Tutors	Academic Tutors	After School Enrichment	After School Sports	Community Garden	Computer Lab	Field Trips	Grant Writing	Homework Help	Library Volunteers	Lunch Recess	Mentoring	Recess Supervisor	Writing Skills
Stonehurst*	879-1550	X	X												
Thornhill	879-1570	X	X												
Thurgood Marshall	879-1740	X	X							X			X		
Toler Heights	879-1590	X	X									X	X		
Washington *	879-1610	X	X									X			
Webster Academy	879-1620	X	X							X			X		
Whittier	879-1630	X	X	X				X		X			X		X

\*Child development center or preschool on-site

## SECTION 2 – Organizing Adopt-A-School Activities



### Spruce Up Day

#### What Is a Spruce-Up Day?

A school Spruce-Up Day provides an opportunity for volunteers to perform tasks like painting, landscaping, minor carpentry and repair work that improves the physical appearance of a school and its environment.

#### How to Organize a School Spruce-Up Day

##### Initial Contact

Before you begin organizing a school Spruce-Up Day contact the school principal or site administrator to obtain permission for the event as well as identify and confirm the school representative who will participate on the day of the event. Describe the types of volunteers you expect to recruit (i.e. unskilled volunteers, professional landscapers, crafts people, etc.) and the amount of time available so the administrator knows what kind of work is possible.

Ask for a “wish list” of things the school would like to have accomplished. Give examples of the work your group can perform.

##### Site Visit & Wish List

After receiving permission to proceed and the wish list, schedule an on-site meeting with the administrator or designated contact person. Tour the site early in the planning process. Bring the wish list so you can ask questions about specific items and the administrator can add new items.

At the end of the tour, explain that you will review the wish list to determine which projects you can realistically accomplish. Remember, projects almost always take longer than you expect. Make a contingency plan for completing items that aren’t finished at the end of the Spruce-Up Day.

##### Reality Check

Think of the wish list and site visit as “brainstorming” sessions. Afterward you must pare down the list to a realistic number of tasks and begin planning the project. Be sure to send a copy of the revised “wish list” to the school.

There are three major considerations to keep in mind as you select tasks:

- How much time do you have? One day, a weekend, etc.?
- How many volunteers will you have and what are their skills?
- How much money and resources will you have at your disposal?

After revising the wish list you will begin to “plan-out” each task to determine your material and volunteer needs.



### **“Plan-Out”**

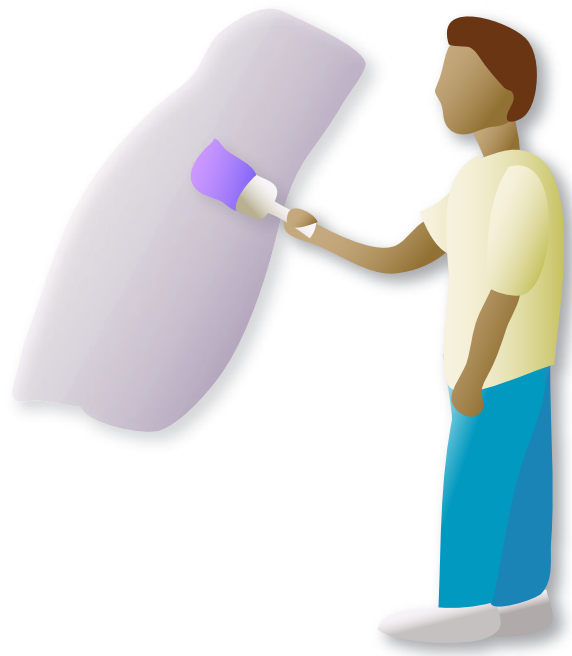
Begin by visualizing each task, step-by-step, from start to finish. Determine how many people and what materials are required to complete each step. Repeat this process until you can outline each task down to the last nail and brush stroke.

It is important to consult with the school site administrator at this point to make sure your plans are consistent with the school’s priorities.

The final step is to review the sequencing of tasks and recalculate how much time, materials and volunteers you’ll need. For example, if three different tasks each require a pair of shovels, you may need six shovels if all three tasks must be done simultaneously. It’s always a good idea to have extra tools in case more volunteers show up.

### **Getting Supplied**

Most Spruce-Up Day projects have limited budgets. To maximize funds and resources, divide your materials list into types of materials and tools needed. Before purchasing any supplies, find out if friends, co-workers and associates have connections to businesses that may donate materials. Try to borrow tools or ask volunteers to bring theirs. Some agencies lend tools. For example, the City of Oakland’s Public Works Department will lend tools for clean up projects in Oakland.



Request donations from businesses near the school. This is also an excellent opportunity for businesses to help improve their neighborhoods. Send participating businesses a donation letter that outlines your project goals, as well as the date, time and location and how supporters will be recognized.

One small but important detail is to make sure you have somewhere to store materials as you collect them. Depending on the size of your project, it is easy to accumulate a garage full of supplies.

### **Recruiting Volunteers**

Volunteers are the most important part of your project. Nothing happens without them. Create a flyer that includes a description of the project, date, time, location, and RSVP/contact information. Provide the school with enough copies of the flyer for parents and staff. Ask a group you are a member of to take this on as a project. Arrange to speak at community meetings in the school neighborhood. If possible, recruit parents, students and school neighbors to help. Ask the administrator for



names of organizations that have a relationship with the school so you can invite them to help. Approach any individual or organization that may want to support this project.

You will recruit most volunteers by phone. It is important to communicate your excitement as you describe the project and how much volunteer assistance is needed and appreciated. Recruiting volunteers often takes persistence. If you feel uncomfortable asking people to give of their time, remember this: Volunteering to help improve a school is a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young people. You are offering a potential volunteer this opportunity.

Make a list of the phone numbers of every volunteer who said “Yes” and call each one the week before the project. These calls are essential. If you don’t make them, your turnout will be poor. Remind volunteers of project date, time and location or leave information in a voicemail message if you don’t get an answer. You will also have a more accurate “head count” when arranging for food and drinks.

Make final reminder calls a day or two in advance.

### **The Big Day(s)**

The goal for your School Spruce-Up Day(s) is for volunteers to have a rewarding experience, for the project to run as smoothly as possible and for all scheduled work to be completed.

To help assure a successful outcome, assemble a team to manage the work. Designate a project manager to oversee the project and team leaders to supervise different work areas or large tasks. Write brief, but concise instructions for your project manager and team leaders.

Have a sign-in table at the entrance staffed with enough people so volunteers sign in, get a nametag and receive a brief orientation as they arrive. Orientation can be as simple as: “Food is over here. Bathrooms are there. Lunch will be served at noon. These are the tasks we’re doing. Tell me what you’d like to do and I’ll point you in the right direction. Thanks for coming!”

Once the work begins, the project manager should monitor the progress of all tasks to make sure they’re being done properly and completely. The project manager should also check regularly with team leaders throughout the day to determine their volunteer needs and communicate these needs to the people at the Volunteer Check-In table so that volunteers can be directed to specific areas as they arrive.

Here are some suggestions that will make your project a rewarding experience:

- Coffee, juice and continental breakfast if your project starts in the morning,
- Plenty of snacks and beverages,
- Clear instructions for team leaders,
- Tasks that are appropriate for a variety of skill and physical strength levels,
- Visible recognition of donors and supporters, like a poster prominently



displayed at the event or an article in the organization's newsletter,

- Plan for any trash that may be generated,
- Take lots of pictures and a photo of the entire group,
- Send thank you letters to all the volunteers and supporters,

At the end of the day, you and your volunteers will experience some sore, tired muscles but more importantly, the satisfaction of seeing how your labors improved a school. This work would not take place without the generosity of volunteers like you.

Thank you for caring about schools. Volunteers make a huge difference.





## School Spruce-Up Day(s) Checklist

- ✓ Contact the school principal or site administrator.  
Ask for a “Wish List.” Tour the facility.
- ✓ Set a date for the Spruce-Up Day(s).
- ✓ Determine how much time, what materials and how many volunteers you need to accomplish the requested tasks.
- ✓ Determine the number of volunteers you currently have available for your project.
- ✓ Recruit more volunteers.
- ✓ Solicit donations to purchase materials or purchase them directly. Collect the necessary tools. Borrow tools, if possible.
- ✓ Ask local stores to donate food and beverages for “Spruce Up Day” volunteers.
- ✓ Give everyone a nametag. Provide a brief orientation and necessary tools or equipment.
- ✓ Monitor work as it progresses.
- ✓ Take group photo.
- ✓ Send thank-you letters to all volunteers and donors.

**For more information on organizing a School Spruce-Up Day, contact Garrett Dempsey, 16th Assembly District Office, (510) 286-1670.**

# SAMPLE SPRUCE-UP DAY FLYER

## Let's work together to help our schools

"There has never been a more important time to reach out to children."

Wilma Chan, California Assembly Majority Leader

It's no secret; schools are facing difficult times. Bad economic times have resulted in teacher layoffs and cuts to programs that are critical to children's success. This has been especially tough here in the Bay Area where there is a long tradition of supporting public education. While everyone continues to work together to fight for education funding, we need to get active now to help local schools.

Whether you lend a hand for a single day or volunteer every week, children need your help to succeed.

### Spend a day this fall.....

With Assemblywoman Wilma Chan and hundreds of volunteers sprucing up pre-school centers in Oakland and Alameda. Volunteers will garden, paint bookshelves, perform light carpentry, improve playgrounds and clean up. No experience is necessary, just energy and elbow grease.

In the last two years, Wilma Chan's office has organized more than 600 volunteers to spruce up Arroyo Viejo Pre-School in Eastmont, Hintil Kuu Ka Pre-School in Redwood Heights, Prescott Pre-School in the Prescott/West Oakland Neighborhood, Fruitvale School and El Centro Infantil de la Raza Pre-School in the Fruitvale, Manzanita Pre-School in San Antonio, Stonehurst Pre-School in Elmhurst - all in Oakland and Woodstock Pre-School and Towata Park in Alameda.

Please mark your calendars.

### Saturday, October 4

Golden Gate Pre-School

6232 Herzog, at 63rd Street -- 1 block east of San Pablo Ave.

Oakland

### Saturday, October 11

Woodstock Pre-School

190 Singleton, off Main

Alameda

**Workdays start at 9am and run until sundown. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided to all volunteers.** For more information or to RSVP, please return the attached card, call 510-286-1670 or go to <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a16/>

-----  
\_\_\_ YES. I'll lend a hand at (check one or more):

\_\_\_ Fruitvale Pre-School (check days) \_\_\_ Saturday, Sept. 20 \_\_\_ Sunday, Sept. 21

\_\_\_ Laurel Pre-School, Saturday, September 20

\_\_\_ Golden Gate Pre-School, Saturday, Oct. 4

\_\_\_ Woodstock Pre-School, Saturday, October 11

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Assemblywoman Wilma Chan, 1515 Clay St. #2204, Oakland, CA 94612 - OR - Fax to: 510-286-1888



### Promote Accelerated Literacy (PAL) Program

Even if you can't spare a minute to volunteer at a school, you can help promote early literacy among Pre-Kindergarten students in public preschools and child development centers (CDC's) in Oakland and Alameda by supporting a "Promote Accelerated Literacy" (P.A.L.) program.

Promoting early literacy can change a child's life forever. The development of early literacy skills through exposure to books and stories is critically linked to a child's success in learning to read. Children who have not developed basic literacy skills by the time they enter school are 3 to 4 times more likely to drop out of school in later years. On the other hand, students who had access to books and other reading materials score higher in achievement tests than those who have fewer reading materials.



### What Is A P.A.L. Program?

One example of a successful P.A.L. program occurred at the Fruitvale Preschool in Oakland. Volunteers started a P.A.L program to provide every preschool student with books to start their own home library. Using a list of age-appropriate books provided by the preschool teacher, the P.A.L. program raised enough funds to purchase books for every student in the class. For many children these were the first books they'd ever owned.

### Setting up a P.A.L. program is fun and easy. Here's how:

1. **Contact the teacher** of the preschool or CDC of your choice to ask if s/he would like a P.A.L. program for the school. If so, find out how many preschool students are in the class. ***Schools in Oakland and Alameda that have preschools or CDC's are identified in the listings of specific volunteer opportunities. (See pages 9-12)***
2. **Ask the teacher for a list of recommended books** and whether some books should be in languages other than English. If so, what are those languages? Will the books be for students' personal use or for the classroom library? Also ask for an estimate of the cost per book.
3. **Decide how many books you want to provide for each student and calculate the cost.**
4. **There are many ways to raise money to purchase books.** Ask individuals, businesses and organizations to contribute. Write letters to personal friends. Host a party or a potluck and ask guests to contribute to your P.A.L. program.
5. **Go "shopping."** There are several ways to purchase books recommended by the teacher. Ask the teacher for suggestions. Possible sources include local educational resource stores, bookstores, and education web sites.



6. **Once you've purchased the books, host a special celebration** at the preschool or CDC to present them to the students. Clear this with the teacher first and also ask the teacher to invite parents and caregivers to the celebration.
7. **Experience the satisfaction of knowing you've given an invaluable gift** by promoting early literacy for young learners.

### **Shining Examples Of Service**

The volunteer spirit is alive and well in the East Bay. Here are some inspiring examples of volunteer projects taking place in our schools.

**Temple Sinai** in Oakland “adopted” two local elementary schools through its “People of the Book” project. Organized in 1998, the program currently provides more than 30 tutors who meet weekly with 70 students. Additional volunteers conduct weekly story times, a music enrichment program, occasional art programs and book giveaway events. (Last year alone, “People of the Book” distributed 1,750 books to students.) Library volunteers cleaned and organized both schools’ libraries, placed over 3,500 books on library shelves, purchased beanbag chairs and carpets to make the libraries more inviting and converted one school library to a fully automated system.

**American President Lines (APL)**, a leader in the global container transportation industry, is headquartered in Oakland. Beginning in 2000, APL forged a relationship with an Oakland elementary school that combines periodic monetary support with ongoing employee volunteerism. APL has donated surplus computers and learning materials, helped plant trees at the school and sponsored a school field trip. Employee volunteers also work with students, teachers and parents to help improve student test scores in the key areas of reading and math.

### **Junior League of Oakland-East Bay**

The Junior League of Oakland-East Bay (JLOEB) undertook an ambitious partnership with an Oakland elementary school in 2001. JLOEB created an After School Literacy Program for Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade students that it coordinates and funds. JLOEB members also volunteer as reading tutors, provide literacy training for parents, assist with field trips. They have also sponsored several events including a Book Drive, Family Reading and Game Night, Ice Cream Social, and School Open House.

### **Oral Lee Brown Foundation**

One individual can make a huge difference, as well. In 1987, local realtor, Oral Lee Brown “adopted” all twenty-three 1st graders from an East Oakland elementary school whose test scores were among the lowest in the nation. Ms. Brown promised each student a college education if they would stay in school. Oral Lee Brown kept her promise and so did the students. With financial support from a foundation she created, as well as her constant emotional support, every student, with the exception of one student, graduated from high school and went on to college or trade school.



## SECTION 3 – Organizations That Can Help You With Your Efforts

### Volunteer Needs of Individual Schools

Most volunteer opportunities don't require any special experience. Oakland HEROES provides General Orientation and Literacy Training for volunteers in Oakland's public schools, as does the Alameda Education Foundation's "I Can Read" program for reading tutors in Alameda's public schools. Be assured that whatever volunteer opportunity you choose, your efforts are needed and greatly appreciated.

### Oakland Schools

**Oakland HEROES** is a non-profit program that acts as a clearinghouse for volunteers in Oakland's public schools. There are three requirements for volunteering through HEROES:

1. Complete and return a registration form. Be sure to indicate a school or geographical preference on your application, and the type of volunteer assistance you can provide. Once your completed application is received, HEROES will contact you to schedule an Orientation Session. To receive a registration form, phone (510) 879-2908 or visit HEROES' web site: [www.oaklandheroes.org](http://www.oaklandheroes.org).
2. Attend a HEROES General Orientation. If you will be working on basic reading skills with a K-3rd grader, you will need to attend Literacy Training instead. Orientations and Literacy Training are held in the afternoons, evenings and on weekends. On-site orientations can be arranged for groups of six or more volunteers from businesses, organizations or government agencies.
3. Obtain a tuberculosis test or provide proof of a TB test taken with the past 60 days. The test will be valid for four years. (Education Code, Section 11780 requires that all persons working in district schools, including volunteers, be tested for tuberculosis when they begin working at a school and every four years thereafter.)

If you are planning to be a volunteer coach or will be working alone with a student, you will also have to be fingerprinted. Oakland HEROES can refer you to the District nurse for TB tests, as well as schedule fingerprinting appointments.

**For more information on how to volunteer, call (510) 879-2908 or visit HEROES' web site: [www.oaklandheroes.org](http://www.oaklandheroes.org).**

### Alameda Schools

The non-profit **Alameda Education Foundation (AEF)** administers the programs described below to raise funds and provide resources for Alameda's public schools.

#### Adopt A Classroom

Bank of Alameda and AEF created the "Adopt A Classroom" program to



encourage business and individuals to donate \$500 grants for the Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) teachers to use to support classroom instruction. In many cases, students help decide how the money should be spent. These tax-deductible donations give teachers opportunities to enhance their students' education in ways that would not otherwise be possible.

### **“I Can Read”**

The “I Can Read” program recruits, trains and places community volunteers in classrooms to help students improve their reading skills.

### **Teacher Supply Store**

The Teacher Supply Store provides reusable items donated by the community to teachers free of cost. These items include office supplies and equipment, arts and crafts supplies, books, games and other teaching materials. Donated items must be in good condition. **Call 337-7189 for information on location and to arrange a drop off time.**

### **Musical Instrument Donations**

This ongoing program solicits donations of new, used, or refurbished musical instruments for use in various school music programs.

**For more information on how to volunteer, call (510) 337-7189 or visit AEF's web site:**

[www.alamedaeducationfoundation.org](http://www.alamedaeducationfoundation.org)



## Conclusion

The Adopt-A-School, School Spruce-Up Day and PAL programs are wonderful opportunities for community-minded businesses, organizations, faith-based associations and individuals to “give back” to the communities where they live and work. While there are no simple solutions to the challenges facing schools today, these issues can and are being addressed through the active involvement of organizations and individuals.

Volunteering provides its own rewards as well. Studies show that people who volunteer live longer, healthier and happier lives because volunteerism increases one’s self-esteem while reducing stress and depression. You will also take with you the satisfaction of knowing that, by helping a child succeed in school, you’ve made a difference.

**Finally, Spread the Word About The Adopt-A-School Program.** You can spread the word by:

- Share this “how-to guide” with friends and colleagues.
- Spread the word that adopting a school is fun, easy and a wonderful way to have a positive impact on local neighborhoods and communities.
- Challenge other individuals, businesses and organizations to start an Adopt-A-School program of their own.

## Adopt-A-School Checklist



- ✓ Decide how much time you can spend volunteering and how often you can volunteer.
- ✓ Consider the skills or resources you want to offer.
- ✓ Select a school where you would like to volunteer.
- ✓ Contact the school principal to arrange an introductory meeting to learn more about the school and volunteer opportunities, as well as any preliminary requirements.
- ✓ Complete any preliminary requirements. For example, state law requires all school volunteers to be tested for tuberculosis and anyone who works individually and unsupervised with a child at school to be fingerprinted. Oakland HEROES will arrange for TB tests for volunteers in the Oakland schools, as well as fingerprinting, if necessary.
- ✓ Attend any mandatory orientation or training sessions. Oakland HEROES provides General Orientation and Literacy Training for volunteers in Oakland's public schools. The Alameda Education Foundation (AEF) trains literacy volunteers who help in Alameda's public schools.
- ✓ Encourage your colleagues, friends and families to Adopt-A-School, too!

### For more information on how to Adopt-A-School contact:

- **The Office of Assemblywoman Wilma Chan:** 510-286-1670  
or email [assemblymember.chan@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:assemblymember.chan@assembly.ca.gov)
- **Oakland HEROES:** 510-879-2908 or [www.oaklandheroes.org](http://www.oaklandheroes.org) or [heroes@ousd.k12.ca.us](mailto:heroes@ousd.k12.ca.us)
- **Alameda Education Foundation:** 510-337-7189 or [www.alamedaeducationfoundation.org](http://www.alamedaeducationfoundation.org) or [info@alamedaeducationfoundation.org](mailto:info@alamedaeducationfoundation.org).



S  
*pecial thanks and appreciation are extended to*

Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft  
Donna Russell  
&  
John Newton

For their assistance in the completion of this handbook